

DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS (DCA)

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INDIA'S DISABILITY LAW

News

- The **Central Public Works Department (CPWD)** recently asked its regional offices to ensure that **“all public buildings are accessible to people with disabilities”**.

Persons with Disabilities(PWDs)

- As per **United Nations Conventions on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities** PWDs include those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.
- As per **National Family Health Survey**, India's population of people with a disability has **reduced to 1% between 2019 and 2021, from the 2.2% (26.8 million)** estimated by the Indian census in 2011.
- As per **2011 population census**, 20% of persons with disabilities in India have a disability in movement, 19% have a disability in seeing, 19% have a disability in hearing and 8% have multiple disabilities.

India's disability law: Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act 2016

- **The RPWD Act, 2016** provides that “the appropriate Government shall ensure that the PWD enjoys the right to equality, life with dignity, and respect for his or her own integrity equally with others.”
- The Act **replaces** the Persons with Disabilities (Equal Opportunities, Protection of Rights and Full Participation) Act, 1995.
- It **fulfills the obligations to the United National Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD)**, to which India is a signatory.
 - ♦ The convention was adopted by the UN General Assembly in December 2006, and entered into force in 2008. **India ratified the convention in 2007.**
- Disability has been defined based on an **evolving and dynamic concept**.
- **The types of disabilities covered are 21** and the **Central Government has the power** to add more types of disabilities.
- The Act provides for **penalties for offences** committed against persons with disabilities and also violation of the provisions of the new law.
- **Special Courts** will be designated in each district to handle cases concerning the violation of the rights of PwDs.

Issues/ Challenges

- **Social Stigma:** The word disability is being seen as a social stigma, according to which parents feel ashamed of their children, and in fear most of them feel uncomfortable in public upfront.
- **Institutional Failures:** Indian education system and Government institutions both are failing in making arrangements for the welfare for disabled persons to an extent. There should be proper seats for disabled persons at classrooms as well as at the exam centres.
- **Illiteracy** is particularly prevalent among disabled people and constitutes a double disadvantage. In addition to being disabled, they are isolated by illiteracy.
- **Unemployment:** Disabled persons are the ones who are scapegoats in getting fired at tenure of recessions. They are first to be discharged from their services when cost cutting methods are adopted by the companies.
- **Poor implementation:** According to PwDs and activists, the 2016 guidelines were never implemented, and the 2021 guidelines are being treated similarly. No state has implemented the harmonized guidelines released in 2021, in their building by-laws.
- **Lack of awareness and accountability:** The implementation of accessibility standards has been haphazard. There is no consistency, there is a lack of budgetary allocation, and no monitoring and sensitisation.

Measures needed

- **Change in approach from ‘For’ PWD to ‘By’ PWD:** “For” implies actions or initiatives done on behalf of persons with disabilities, while “by” signifies involvement and participation of persons with disabilities in the process.
- **Formulation of Comprehensive Inclusive Policies:** With focus on addressing unique challenges faced by individuals with disabilities that encompasses social, economic, and gender dimensions.
 - ♦ The inclusion of persons with disabilities into the economy can help **boost global GDP between 3% to 7%**, as per the study by the International Labour Organization (ILO).
- **Collaborative Process with PWDs and private sector:** Where persons with disabilities are not passive recipients but active contributors and the private sector as a key player in promoting employment opportunities for persons with disabilities.
 - ♦ **Opportunities Cafe in Kolkata** is run by 16 young adults who have intellectual disabilities, who are trained in hospitality by the cafe itself.

- **Attitudinal Shift and Social Justice:** The SPARK project by ILO with Women's Development Corporation in Maharashtra has contributed to an attitudinal shift towards PWDs by putting them in the lead and trained as **Disability Inclusion Facilitators (DIFs)**.
- **Education system:** There should be **reforms in Education system** to build a better society through which disabled persons can face the challenges of life with courage and conscience.
- **PWD-friendly infrastructure:** Universal accessibility should be incorporated in the site planning and detailed working drawings of public as well as private projects.
- **Job-oriented training:** Job-oriented training is the need of the time. There should be well trained professionals for training who can ignite the minds and train them to cater the needs of the service industry.
 - ♦ **Vocal and linguistic teachers** should be recruited for the overall well being of the people.

Government Schemes and Initiatives

1. **The Harmonised Guidelines and Standards for Universal Accessibility in India, 2021:** These guidelines are an enabling step towards strengthening the national mandate of an Accessible India and a self-reliant India with a vision for a universally accessible and inclusive India.
2. **Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities:** Understanding the special needs of Persons with Disabilities (PwDs), the government carved out a special department under the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment.
3. **'Divyang':** With a view to change the societal attitude towards PwDs and to encourage them to participate in the society without any feeling of inferiority, the Prime Minister coined the term 'divyang' to denote PwDs.
4. **Accessible India Campaign:** The campaign was launched in 2015 to create a barrier-free environment for divyangjan. The project envisages creation of ramps, help desks and accessible toilets in public places.
5. **Sugamya Bharat:** To understand the problems of divyangjan, the Government has launched the Sugamya Bharat app. The app lets people provide feedback on accessibility issues for PwDs.
6. **Unique Disability Identity Project (UDID):** The Project is aimed at easing disability certification, while weeding out fraud in the process.
7. **Divya Kala Shakti:** It is a scheme of the Government of India to encourage divyangjan to participate in cultural activities.

8. **Assistance to Disabled Persons for Purchase/Fitting of Aids and Appliances (ADIP) Scheme:** Under this programme, the Government provides aids and assistive devices to PwDs.

Conclusion

- PwDs constitute **one of the most vulnerable sections** of the country. They also can be a **source of untapped potential**, which, if harnessed well, may increase the economic growth and development in the country.
- The **need of the hour is proper sensitization of the community** towards the issues faced by PwDs, as well as to remove the social stigma attached to their integration into the society.

CODE TO CHECK UNETHICAL DRUG PRACTICES

Context

- The Union government has notified a code outlining strategies to promote pharmaceutical products and curb unethical practices within the sector.

Uniform Code for Pharmaceuticals Marketing Practices (UCPMP) 2024

- A drug can only be promoted after obtaining marketing approval, and the term **'safe' cannot be used without qualification**.
- Free drug samples should not be supplied to individuals who are not qualified to prescribe such products.
- It **prohibits healthcare professionals from accepting gifts** from pharma companies or agents, including paid vacations, unless attending conferences, seminars, or workshops where the speaker is participating in Continuing Medical Education (CME) or Continuing Professional Development (CPD) programmes.
- **Brand names of products of other companies** must not be used in comparison unless the prior consent of the companies concerned has been obtained,
- Under the guidelines, companies may provide **informational and educational material** such as books and clinical treatment guidelines, valued at not more than Rs 1,000 per item.
- Various pharmaceutical associations have been instructed to set up an **"Ethics Committee for Pharma Marketing Practices"** to handle complaints.

Pharma-Doctor Nexus: Freebies to Doctors

- Freebies referred to as the “**Doctors’ Commission**” have always been a part of the system and pharma companies give out gifts, in cash or kind, to medical professionals to prescribe their brand of drug.
- Justice D.Y. Chandrachud had described the issue as ‘serious’ when the manufacturer making an antipyretic drug ‘Dolo’ had allegedly spent exorbitant amounts of money on marketing.

Challenges associated with this relationship

- **Conflict of Interest:** Doctors are expected to make medical decisions based on the best interests of patients, and financial or material benefits may compromise this objectivity.
- **Patient Trust and Confidence:** Patients rely on the expertise and unbiased judgment of their doctors, and any perception of undue influence from pharmaceutical companies can undermine this trust.
- **Economic Impact on Healthcare Costs:** If doctors are influenced to prescribe more expensive medications due to relationships with pharmaceutical companies, it could contribute to higher healthcare costs.
- **Professional Ethics and Integrity:** Medical professionals are expected to adhere to ethical standards that prioritize patient welfare.
 - ♦ Accepting gifts or benefits from pharmaceutical companies may be perceived as a breach of professional ethics and integrity.
- **Regulatory Compliance:** Violations of guidelines and regulations, such as those set by the Medical Council of India (MCI) or other regulatory bodies, can lead to professional and legal consequences for doctors and pharmaceutical companies.
- **Public Perception and Image:** The perception of a cozy relationship between doctors and pharmaceutical companies can negatively impact the image of the healthcare profession as a whole. It may be perceived as prioritizing commercial interests over patient welfare.

Other measures taken by Government

- **Medical Council of India (MCI) Guidelines:** The MCI, which regulates the medical profession in India, has issued guidelines that address the issue of gifts and benefits from pharmaceutical companies.
 - ♦ These guidelines emphasize **maintaining professional independence and integrity.**
- **National Pharmaceutical Pricing Authority (NPPA):** The NPPA monitors and regulates the prices of pharmaceutical products in India.

While its primary focus is on pricing, it also plays a role in ensuring fair trade practices within the pharmaceutical industry.

- **Collaboration with Professional Bodies:** The government collaborates with professional medical associations and bodies to develop and implement guidelines that address the ethical concerns related to interactions between doctors and pharmaceutical companies.

Indian Pharmaceutical Industry

- Indian pharmaceutical industry is the **3rd largest** pharmaceutical industry in the world by volume with current market size of around **USD 50 Billions.**
- India, the **world’s largest provider of generic drugs** exported pharmaceuticals worth over 25 billion U.S. dollars in the financial year 2023.
- According to the **Indian Economic Survey 2021**, the pharmaceutical industry in India is expected to reach **USD 120-130 Billion by 2030.**

SABARMATI GANDHI ASHRAM REDEVELOPMENT PROJECT

Context

- **The Prime Minister** launched a **master plan for the Sabarmati Gandhi Ashram redevelopment project** and inaugurated the **redeveloped Kochrab Ashram** in **Ahmedabad** on the **anniversary of the Dandi March.**

About

- The **central government and Gujarat government** are jointly implementing the **Gandhi Ashram Memorial and Precinct Development Project.**
- The redevelopment and restoration plan is based on an **aerial image from 1949 of the ashram and on the ashram’s documented accounts.**
- A **‘Mohan to Mahatma Park’**, an arboretum that will have trees from “all states and Union Territories”, a **herbal garden** shaped in the famous pose of Gandhi walking with his staff, a meditation hall, and a ‘dhyana kendra’: these have been proposed.

Historical importance of the Gandhi Ashram at Sabarmati:

- **Setting up of Ashrams:** Mahatma Gandhi set up five settlements during his lifetime — two in South Africa (Phoenix Settlement in Natal, and Tolstoy

Farm outside Johannesburg), where he lived from **1893 to 1914**, and three in India, where he arrived in 1915.

- ♦ He set up the first ashram in Ahmedabad in **Kocharab in 1915**.
- **Sabarmati Ashram:** In 1917, Gandhiji founded the ashram at **Sabarmati** — his fourth ashram — on the **western bank of the Sabarmati River**.
 - ♦ The location was to the **north of the village of Juna Vadaj**, beyond the Chandrabhaga rivulet, a tributary of the Sabarmati.
- **Time Spent in Ashram:** Gandhi spent the most time here, and it was the **cradle of eight major movements** related to India's struggle for independence.
- **Movements Launched:** Apart from the Dandi March that Gandhiji began from here on March 12, 1930, he also launched the Champaran Satyagraha (1917), the Ahmedabad mills strike and Kheda Satyagraha (1918), the Khadi movement (1918), the Rowlatt Act and Khilafat Movements (1919), and the Non-Cooperation movement (1920) while living in Sabarmati.

Source: **IE**

19TH FOUNDATION DAY OF NCPCR

Context

- **The National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR)** celebrated its **19th Foundation Day on 12th March, 2024**.

About

- National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) was established in **2007** under the **Commission for Protection of Child Rights Act, 2005**.
- The commission's mandate is **to ensure that all laws, policies, programs and administrative systems** conform to the vision of the rights of the child as **enunciated in the Constitution of India as well as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child**.
- A child is defined as a person falling in the **age group of 0 to 18 years**.
- **Functions of NCPCR:** NCPCR is constantly broadening the range of activities that can be undertaken such as developing new strategies for better monitoring, developing step-by-step processes to enable the authorities to carry out their duties.
 - ♦ It also includes preparing policy frameworks, using digital technology for improving the monitoring process, undertaking research

studies, and first hand investigation on matters of serious nature.

What rights do Children Have?

- Child rights elaborate upon the do's and don'ts of dealing with children and matters related to them.
- These needs or requirements of children have been broadly divided into four areas or categories- **survival, development, protection and participation**.

Right to Survival (this includes all the basic necessities of a child including food, nutrition, health care)	Right to Development (includes all that is required for a child to develop to the fullest and for enhancing the overall well-being such as education, recreation, skill development)
Right to Protection (children are to be protected against any kind of neglect, abuse, harassment, discrimination, exploitation)	Right to Participation (to express their views and opinions in the matters related to children and participate in the decisions concerning children)

Constitutional Rights of Children in India

- The Constitution of India guarantees all children certain rights these include:
 - ♦ Right to free and compulsory elementary education for all children in the 6-14 year age group (Article 21 A).
 - ♦ Right to be protected from any hazardous employment till the age of 14 years (Article 24).
 - ♦ Right to be protected from being abused and forced by economic necessity to enter occupations unsuited to their age or strength (Article 39(e)).
 - ♦ Right to equal opportunities and facilities to develop in a healthy manner and in conditions of freedom and dignity and guaranteed protection of childhood and youth against exploitation and against moral and material abandonment (Article 39 (f)).

India have following major Acts for children:

- Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, 2012
- Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015
- Rights of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act, 2009
- Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Amendment Act, 2016
- Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006
- Pre-Conception and Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques (Prohibition of Sex Selection) Act (PCPNDT) Act, 1994.

United Nations Convention on the Rights Of The Child

- Applies equally to both girls and boys up to the age of 18, even if they are married or already have children of their own.
- The convention is guided by the principles of 'Best Interest of the Child' and 'Non-discrimination' and 'Respect for views of the child.'
- It emphasises the importance of the family and the need to create an environment that is conducive to the healthy growth and development of children.
- It obligates the state to respect and ensure that children get a fair and equitable deal in society.

- It was introduced by the **15th-16th century** reformer saint **Srimanta Sankardeva**.
- **Categories:**
 - ♦ **Mukha Bhaona:** It covers the face;
 - ♦ **Lotokoi:** Bigger in size extends to the chest; and,
 - ♦ **Cho Mukha:** It is a head and body mask.
- **Cultural Significance:** The masks are an integral part of the **Sankardev tradition**, used in traditional performing arts such as **Borgeet (Songs), Sattriya (Dance), and Bhaona (Theatre)**, which are practised in the Sattras.

Silver Filigree Work (Chandi Tarakasi)

- It is a type of super-finely designed art-wire in silver and gold.

NEWS IN SHORT

GI TAG TO MAJULI MASK AND CHANDI TARAKASI

Context:

- Recently, Majuli Masks of Assam and Famed Silver Filigree Work (Chandi Tarakasi) of Cuttack received GI tag.

The Majuli Masks of Assam



- These are **handmade masks** traditionally used to depict **characters in 'Bhaonas', or theatrical performances** with devotional messages under the **neo-Vaishnavite tradition**.
 - ♦ These are made of **bamboo, clay, dung, cloth, cotton, wood**, and other materials available in the riverine surroundings of their makers.
 - ♦ It depicts gods, goddesses, demons, animals, and birds etc.

Do you know?

- Majuli is the largest riverine island in the world, located in the vast expanse of Brahmaputra in Assam.



- The term '**Tarakasi**' is a combination of two words in Odia — '**Tara**' (*wire*) and '**Kasi**' (*design*).
- It is a unique craft that has been practised in **Cuttack**, the oldest city of **Odisha**, for centuries.
- As part of **Rupa Tarakasi**, silver bricks are transformed into thin fine wires or foils and used to create jewellery or showpieces.

Historical Origin:

- While the exact origin of the filigree art in Cuttack is not clear, it is known to have existed as far back as the 12th century.
- It received considerable patronage under the Mughals.

Additional Information:

- A GI tag is conferred upon products originating from a specific geographical region, signifying unique characteristics and qualities.
 - ♦ Essentially, it serves as a trademark in the international market.

Approving and Regulating GI Tag:

- GIs are covered as a component of Intellectual Property Rights (IPRs) under the Paris Convention for the Protection of Industrial Property.

- At the **International level**, GI is governed by the **World Trade Organisation's** (WTO's) Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS).
- In India, GIs registration is administered by the **Geographical Indications of Goods (Registration and Protection) Act, 1999**.
 - ♦ The **first product in India** to be accorded with GI tag was **Darjeeling tea** in the year 2004-05.

SAVITRIBAI PHULE

About

- A pioneer who challenged oppressive social norms in her quest for women's education, equality and justice, Savitribai Phule is **formally recognised as India's first woman teacher**.

About Savitribai Phule

- A **Dalit woman from the Mali community**, Savitribai was born on January 3, 1831, in **Maharashtra's** Naigaon village. Married off at the tender age of 10, **her husband Jyotirao Phule** is said to have educated her at home.
- Later, **Jyotirao admitted Savitribai to a teachers' training institution** in Pune. Throughout their life, the couple supported each other and in doing so, **broke many social barriers**.

Major Contributions

- **Country's first girls' school:** At a time when it was considered unacceptable for women to even attain education, **the couple went on to open a school for girls** in Bhide Wada, Pune, in **1848**.
- **Quality education:** One report from 1852 in The Poona Observer states, "The number of girl students in Jyotirao's school is ten times more than the number of boys studying in the government schools.
 - ♦ This is because the system for teaching girls is far superior to what is available for boys in government schools."
- **Protectors of women and children:** Along with Jyotirao, Savitribai started the **Balhatya Pratibandhak Griha ('Home for the Prevention of Infanticide')** for pregnant widows facing discrimination.
- **Marriage system reforms:** Savitribai Phule also advocated inter-caste marriages, widow remarriage, and eradication of child marriage, sati and dowry systems, among other social issues.

- ♦ The Phules also adopted Yashwantrao, the child of a widow, whom they educated to become a doctor.
- **Satyashodhak Samaj:** In 1873, the Phule couple set up the Satyashodhak Samaj ('Truth-seekers' society'), a platform open to all, irrespective of their caste, religion or class hierarchies, with the sole aim of bringing social equity.
 - ♦ As an extension, they started '**Satyashodhak Marriage**' – a rejection of Brahmanical rituals where the marrying couple takes a pledge to promote education and equality.
- **Rejection of caste system:** Urging women to break free of caste barriers, Savitribai encouraged them to sit together at her meetings.
- **Rejection of patriarchal traditions:** At her husband's funeral procession on November 28, 1890, Savitribai again defied convention and carried the **titve** (earthen pot).
 - ♦ Walking ahead of the procession, Savitribai was the one who consigned his body to the flames, a ritual which is still predominantly carried out by men.
- **Relief work:** Setting an extraordinary example of living a life of compassion, service and courage, Savitribai became involved in relief work during the 1896 famine in Maharashtra and the 1897 Bubonic plague.
 - ♦ She herself contracted the disease while taking a sick child to the hospital, and breathed her last on March 10, 1897.
- **Literary works:** Savitribai Phule published her first collection of poems, called **Kavya Phule** ('Poetry's Blossoms'), at the age of 23 in 1854. She published **Bavan Kashi Subodh Ratnakar** ('The Ocean of Pure Gems'), in 1892.
 - ♦ Besides these works, **Matushri Savitribai Phlenchi Bhashane va Gaani** (Savitribai Phule's speeches and songs'), and her letters to her husband have also been published.

OATH CEREMONY OF CHIEF MINISTER

Context

- Nayab Singh Saini took oath as the new chief minister of Haryana.

Constitutional Provisions

- The Constitution does not contain any specific procedure for the selection and appointment of the Chief Minister.
- **Article 163(1)** of the Constitution says "there shall be a Council of Ministers with the Chief Minister (CM) at the head to aid and advise the Governor in the exercise of his functions".

- **Article 164(1)** says “the Chief Minister (CM) shall be appointed by the Governor and the other Ministers shall be appointed by the Governor on the advice of the CM”.

Appointment of the CM

- In accordance with the conventions of the Parliamentary system of government, the Governor has to appoint the **leader of the majority party** in the state legislative assembly as the Chief Minister.
- When no party has a clear majority in the assembly, then the Governor may **exercise his personal discretion** in the selection and appointment of the Chief Minister.
- According to the Constitution, the Chief Minister may be a member of **any of the two Houses** of a state legislature.
- A person who is not a member of the state legislature can be appointed as Chief Minister for six months, within which time, he/she should be elected to the state legislature, failing which he ceases to be the Chief Minister.

Oath ceremony of CM

- **The third Schedule** of the Indian Constitution prescribes the “Forms of Oaths or Affirmations”.
- The Oath, usually administered by the Governor, is a formal pledge to discharge the duties of the office faithfully.

Powers and functions of the Chief Minister

- The Chief Minister advises the governor with regard to the **summoning and proroguing of the sessions** of the state legislature.
- CM is the **main link between the Governor and the Ministers** and is the head of the State Legislative Assembly.
- The CM can **recommend the dissolution of the legislative assembly** to the governor at any time.
- CM acts as a **vice-chairman of the concerned zonal council** by rotation, holding office for a period of one year at a time.

YAOUNDE DECLARATION

Context

- Health ministers of **11 African countries** signed the **Yaounde Declaration** to end **malaria deaths**.

About

- Globally, the number of malaria cases in 2022 surged significantly compared to the pre-COVID-19 era.

- **Africa remains the epicentre** of the malaria crisis, bearing an immense burden.
 - ♦ It accounts for **94 percent** of all global malaria cases and a staggering 95 percent of global malaria-related deaths.
- **The 11 African countries in the Yaoundé conference are**— Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ghana, Mali, Mozambique, Niger, Nigeria, Sudan, Uganda and Tanzania.

Malaria

- Malaria is an **acute febrile illness** caused by **Plasmodium parasites**, which are spread to people through the bites of **infected female Anopheles mosquitoes**. It is preventable and curable.
- Malaria is **not contagious** and cannot spread from one **person to another**; the disease is transmitted through the bites of female Anopheles mosquitoes.

VAJRA SENTINEL SYSTEM

Context

- The Ministry of Defence has signed a contract with Big Bang Boom Solutions Pvt Ltd (BBBS) to supply **‘Vajra Sentinel’ anti-drone system for IAF**.

Vajra Sentinel Anti-Drone System

- It is a **state-of-the-art solution** designed to **detect, track and neutralise** drones at extraordinary ranges.
- It utilises **passive RF sensor technology** to eliminate false alarms, and its sensor and jammer combination meets stringent military standard specifications for durability and reliability.
- The system’s core sensor, built around Artificial Intelligence and computer vision algorithms, enables **precise identification, classification and location identification of drones**.

KARNATAKA BANS USE OF HARMFUL DYES

In News

- Karnataka bans harmful dyes in Gobi Manchurian, cotton candy, imposing imprisonment of up to seven years and fines of up to Rs 10 lakh for violators.

About Chemical Banned

HARMFUL COLOURS FOUND IN FOOD

Rhodamine B: It is used as an industrial dye. Because of its low cost, Rhodamine B is often used for food colouring – an illegal practice by all means. It has been classified as a potential carcinogen by the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC). Its prolonged use in food can lead to liver dysfunction or cancer

Sunset Yellow: It is a synthetic dye used in food, drugs, and cosmetics. If consumed alone or in combination with other dyes, Sunset Yellow can cause allergic or pseudo-allergic reactions and severe reactions among asthma and urticaria patients



Carmoisine: A synthetic food dye, it is also called Food Red. IARC classifies it as a category 3 carcinogen. Its prolonged consumption can affect liver, kidneys and trigger behavioural changes among children, besides triggering skin rashes, and respiratory allergies

Tartrazine: A yellow, nitrous derivative compound, it is used as a synthetic food colouring chemical. Prolonged intake can cause angioedema, eczema, bronchitis, and headaches. It affects the thyroid gland and hormones

TRENDS IN INTERNATIONAL ARMS TRANSFERS, 2023: SIPRI

In News

- Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) remarks India was the world's top arms importer for the period 2019-23.

Key Points

- India's Arms Trend:**
 - India ranked as the world's largest arms importer during the period 2019-23, witnessing a 4.7% increase compared to 2014-18.
 - Russia remained India's primary arms supplier, the share of deliveries from Russia decreased, marking the first time since 1960-64 that it accounted for less than half of India's arms imports.
- Global Trend:**
 - The five largest arms exporters are the **USA, France, Russia, China and Germany**, accounting for 75 per cent of all arms exports.
 - The top five arms importers are India, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Ukraine and Pakistan, receiving 35% of all arms imports in the period.
 - Nine of the 10 biggest arms importer countries in 2019-23, were in Asia and Oceania or the Middle East.

Analysis

- Geopolitical tensions with Pakistan and China** have compelled India to focus on developing a powerful military for defensive purposes.

- Bureaucratic and administrative hurdles** create delays in acquiring weaponry, forcing India to rely heavily on foreign imports to fulfill the military requirements.
- India's nascent domestic arms industry** struggles to manufacture advanced weaponry, necessitating reliance on imports to fulfill defense needs.
- India is making efforts to diversify its arms suppliers to reduce its dependence on any one country, but this process can be difficult and time-consuming.

About SIPRI

- SIPRI was **founded in 1966** by the Swedish parliament as an independent research institute.
- Its main objective is to conduct research on issues related to international peace and security, including arms control, disarmament, and conflict resolution.
- It is funded by a combination of government grants, private donations, and project-based funding.
- SIPRI's flagship publication is the SIPRI Yearbook**, which provides comprehensive data and analysis on global military expenditure, arms transfers, and other relevant security issues.
- The institute also produces other reports, briefs, and databases on various topics related to conflict, arms control, and peacebuilding.
- SIPRI is based in **Stockholm, Sweden**, but has a global reach and influence, with its research and analysis informing policy decisions and public debates in many countries.

BHARAT SHAKTI EXERCISE

Context:

- Recently, the Prime Minister of India witnessed the Exercise Bharat Shakti in Pokhran, Rajasthan.

About the Bharat Shakti Exercise:



- It is a **mega tri-service military exercise**, and a synergised demonstration of indigenous defence capabilities in the form of a tri-services **live fire and manoeuvre exercise**.
- It showcased the **'shock and awe'** impact that the armed forces seek to achieve in an operational situation with manoeuvre and fighting capabilities.
- It demonstrated the *LCA Tejas, ALH Mk-IV, Mobile Anti-drone System, T90 Tanks, Dhanush, K9 Vajra, and Pinaka Rockets and Satellite System*.

Significance:

- **'Bharat Shakti'** displayed an array of indigenous weapon systems, by showcasing the prowess of India's indigenous defence capabilities and **nation's Aatmanirbharata initiative**.
 - ♦ It was a testament to India's growing **self-reliance in defence manufacturing** and its commitment to safeguarding its borders.
- It simulated **realistic, synergised, multi-domain operations** displaying integrated operational capabilities of the Indian Armed Forces to counter threats across **land, air, sea, cyber, and space** domains.

THERMONUCLEAR FUSION

Context

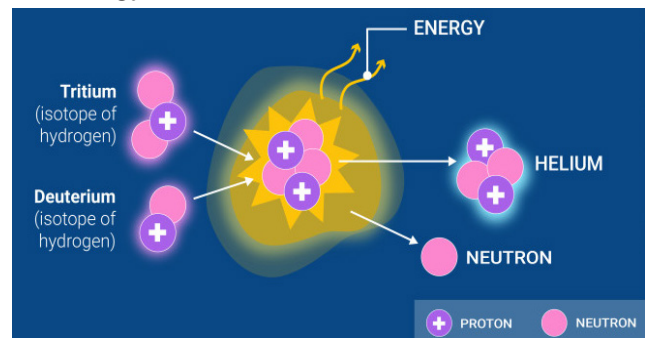
- India and Russia are in discussions to collaborate on a range of activities including research on controlled **thermonuclear fusion**.

Thermonuclear fusion

- Thermonuclear fusion is a process in which two light atomic nuclei combine to form a heavier nucleus, releasing a significant amount of energy in the process.
 - ♦ This process is the same as what powers

stars, including our sun.

- The most common fusion reaction involves the isotopes of hydrogen: **deuterium and tritium**. When these isotopes fuse, they form helium and release a neutron, along with a large amount of energy.



Challenges

- Thermonuclear fusion **requires extremely high temperatures and pressures** to occur, typically in the range of millions of degrees Celsius, which is necessary to overcome the electrostatic repulsion between nuclei.
- **Sustaining the Reaction:** Once the reaction starts, it needs to be self-sustaining (referred to as a burning plasma).
- The fusion reactions currently being run in labs last for barely a few seconds. It is difficult to sustain such extreme high temperatures for prolonged periods.

Recent Development

- Some of the leading fusion research projects include tokamaks, such as **ITER (International Thermonuclear Experimental Reactor)**, and stellarators, as well as alternative concepts like inertial confinement fusion and magnetic confinement fusion.

